

**City Council Outreach: Responses to Proposed Redevelopment of George Mason Square & Pozer Park**  
**September 20, 2011**

Speakers during the outreach session:

Douglas Stewart:

1. Public Plaza: How many public events? Seems event oriented; not sure it will work as a public space. Should be where people sit and talk.
2. To make commercial space work, needs to be better connected to Main Street Marketplace. It's not currently easy for pedestrians to cross Old Lee Highway.
3. Process: Had understood there would be an RFQ. Has there been one? [Mr. Durham responded that there was an RFP that went out on just the George Mason Square properties about half an acre. City received a couple of responses.]

Carol Dooney:

1. Work in Commercial Development (Merrifield and Woodbridge)...There's retail shown. What kind of national retailers do you expect?
2. Parking deck costs look low.
3. Truck turning radius vs. loading arrangements and streets problematic. Existing restaurants downtown have problems with loading.
4. Consider tree disruption during construction.
5. Currently have concerts several places in the City; do you need more?
6. Connectivity: Crossing from library to Starbucks to where GM2 site now impassable.
7. Provide places for trees to grow next to the parking structure.
8. Kiosks don't pay for themselves; might reconsider.
9. Will anyone really want the offices?
10. Council needs nice overall plan to show where retail is now empty; where office is empty (like the parking plan).

Fred Coddling (Coddling Building):

1. Alley has 9' easement. Coddling building has been several churches over the years.
2. Mr. Coddling allowed the City to use his property for several things. He would like a larger boxwood than the one replacing one City removed on his property. He would like a bigger one.
3. According to Mr. Coddling the City agreed in 2004 to keep North Street access for him.
4. Wanted to know if there would be a barrier between the parking [behind Draper House] and the top of the parking deck. [Mr. Blevins responded that there would be no barrier to the top deck.]
5. Wanted to know what the pink color between the Coddling Building and the new smaller building represented. [Mr. Blevins responded that it represented patios off the upper and lower levels of the proposed new building.]

Eric Snyder (Downtown Coalition):

1. Several business members asked and have concerns about what happens when the parking in the Weight Watchers lot goes away.
2. More no-left-turn signs than any other municipality in the Washington area.
3. Drivers accelerate from North-bound Old Lee to North Street. Pedestrians are in danger at the corner in front of the library.
4. Raise the plaza 4-5 feet and pick up the 39 spaces below and have access off University. That current lot is highly used.
5. Where ice cream shop went out and Foster's went out others are hanging on by their fingernails.
6. Traffic at University and North is dangerous.

Stan Darke (Factory Tees):

1. Curious what kind of input will be requested from local businesses.
2. We do vintage clothing, people say we wish there were more places like this (his store).
3. People say we wish there were more restaurants; we like to walk around; we like to go into different shops; it's great to see that there's a shop opening up, and we hope you survive.
4. We do a lot of work with local schools; residents want to walk around and have more places to go into and more places to park.
5. Space looks like Central Park, but we need to tie blocks into each other and have shops on each block.
6. As I drove here, noticed University Drive goes down from OTH. Looks like a lot of space will not be used on an everyday basis. How do you create green, park, event space and still have things going on throughout the week? Need to be able to park and have things going on.
7. Like to keep the charm of OTF where people can keep the history, but also have things going on. Don't want to see national chains selling things you can buy anywhere.

Brian Knapp (PRAB):

1. Representing PRAB. Grateful for forum. Presenting PRAB's formal stance from 2006. Developed recommendations over a year because they traveled the site over and over and visited other jurisdictions. Met with Council members.
2. Current KPG is only park in OTF. WW purchased to expand KPG. Potential to offer to many people many uses. Generate additional customers to OT. Plenty of parking. WW property should be integrated fully into KPG. When complete, should not be able to tell where old ended and new began. Expanded garden should incorporate: beautiful landscape features, water feature, gazebo or arbor structure, area for public art, location for permanent Christmas Tree and for a menorah, official entrance at corner of North and University, permanent location for Rotary Clock, information place, brick pathways and a new location for a CUE bus stop. There should be no other parking areas other than those needed for OTH (Loading dock, drop off and HC parking). Should be no play equipment. All areas of garden should meet ADA requirement.
3. As an individual and member of the OS Committee, this parcel stood out. What a great opportunity. Didn't expect to have it happen. Grateful.
4. PRAB wanted to review plan, but weather prevented and no quorum.

Sandra Wilbur (HFCI):

1. HFCI interested in keeping continuity of historic buildings with new development. Would hope that we get detailed study about disruption during construction and distance between Kitty Pozer and new construction.
2. Infrastructure: Were new plantings included in costs? [Mr. Blevins replied "Yes."]

Andrew Margrave (CCH Resident):

1. [We don't shop where we have trouble parking.]
2. Not a good idea to speculate on offices in return for sacrificing parking that existing businesses need. Do what we can to promote Old Town businesses.

Jeff Steffens (Commission on the Arts):

1. Do whatever is necessary to do a first class job.
2. This would be a wonderful place for public art. (There's not a statue of Lord Fairfax anywhere.)
3. OTH needs parking and bus drop-off.

Harry Wilbur (PRAB & Commission on the Arts):

1. Want to thank Jack and the group for getting this off the dime.
2. The park is a hub around which the City does it's work.
3. Parking is important, but I counted 1,086 spaces. In 1300' from the center of downtown there are another 880. Altogether, there are just under 2,000 spaces in available in addition to 21 private lots. But we only have one park downtown.

Rick Dickson:

1. Of the City's 100 spaces in Old Town Village, 25 are reserved for the Fairfax Plaza property.
2. Believes Old Town Village barely has enough parking for itself.
3. "Everybody and their dog" uses the 26 parking spaces at The Shoppes at Fairfax, and "I'm happy to have them use it" but downtown is grossly under-parked.
4. If you want a solution get a major developer such as JBG or Petersen. Get it done right and get the density up. 10,000 SF of retail isn't going to do anything for downtown.
5. Council and Mayor should go to the trustees of the library and to the EDA.
6. We have a flooding problem at Bellissimo etc when we have big rains.

Kevin Lowery (two-year resident):

1. One problem is awareness and signage regarding where the parking spots are.
2. One of the draws of Fairfax Corner, Reston Town Center, Manassas... is the ability for families to park and stay there and have things to do. Not just park and go from store to store, but to eat dinner, hang out, have kids run around and then go shopping again. If you don't have a place to hang out, families will not go there.

Kirk Holly (Community Appearance Committee):

1. This is the key downtown open space that would attract visitors and pedestrians and would reinforce a sense of place. We don't recommend the commercial buildings. We think it should all be open space. Do what's necessary to preserve this key opportunity in the Old Town area.
2. CAC comments to Council from three years ago:
  - a. Support an open area in the old downtown.
  - b. Appreciate that [the plan] takes design cues from the library and the Old Town Hall, and the use of the gazebo.
  - c. Approve of enlarging Pozer Park and opening it up to the street corner.
  - d. Like the use of water features as focal points in this kind of area.
  - e. Appreciate consideration of the economic issues of developing this site and looking for a balanced solution and the vehicle parking issues; don't believe that the majority of this space should be used to solve the parking issues.
3. Recommend making the entire block a public park to serve as an active gateway. However, this particular space does have several historic buildings that we recognize as important to the character of Old Town, and they need to be preserved and incorporated into this space and made to work.
4. At least do the following:
  - a. Provide a "slot view" into the park from the intersection at Old Lee Highway and Little River Turnpike.
  - b. Reduce the commercial building footprint, and don't put the access parallel to Old Lee Highway.
  - c. Incorporate park or plaza features into any open space that might be built or provided between buildings so it feels a bit bigger.
  - d. Create several opportunities for sitting.
  - e. Use structures and trees for shade and high quality materials that are easy to maintain.
  - f. Underground perimeter utilities.

Jenee Lindner (HFCI and as an Individual):

1. Official HFCI: Excited, but we want to be onboard.
2. As a private citizen: Most towns that once existed in the areas are now gone. Not Fairfax. There are a lot of wonderful things here to talk about.
3. Parking must be there. As a potential business owner downtown, I understand the need. We need a unique approach. Colonial Parking (owned by her husband's family) may be a solution.

Judy Frasier (Individual and Environmental Sustainability Committee):

1. The point about the park plaza being a little bit of a reach for this property might be correct.
2. Parking and storm water will drive a lot of the design. Downtown 32 spaces is not a big deal. We need to avoid impermeability.
3. It's a very simple idea to have a nice open space on that property, no matter how the numbers work out.

Written Comments Received:

From the City of Fairfax Economic Development Authority (October 2, 2011):

Mr. Mayor and City Council,

At our meeting on Wednesday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, the EDA unanimously supported development of George Mason Square consistent with the plan presented to the public on Tuesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>. We like the idea of this entire block being a showcase as a combined civic, historic and commercial node. To that end, we all agreed that the extension of Kitty Pozer park should be green space and not an amphitheater of stone and pavers. We believe that the commercial development could be ~ 1/3 larger than planned, instead 25-30k Sq. Ft. And the development should include inter-parcel pedestrian connectivity between the civic, historic and commercial components. Although not favored by the business community, we think that sufficient parking already exists for all downtown business and activities in this area. We could include what the development community calls "teaser" spaces only on the site and forego a larger parking structure. We are proponents of the concept of parking once and walking everywhere as it pertains to downtown.

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Hope this is helpful. Please let us know if you have any questions or would like to discuss more fully.

Michael J. DeMarco